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ABSTRACT

Current educational planning systems have often failed or been irrelevant because they have been based on inaccurate assumptions about educational organizations. Traditional planning models assume educational organizations are goal-driven, follow rational and sequential processes, operate in predictable environments, and have effective internal monitoring. In empirical reality, educational organizations are "organized anarchies." Their goals are not a priori but rather summaries of past activities; they follow trial-and-error procedures, allow multiple preferences and fluid participation, lack effective monitoring, and must operate in unpredictable environments. A more adaptive concept of planning would allow it to be more informal, diverse, multipurpose, naturalistic, and better able to handle contextual variability and multiple products. New frameworks for understanding planning's purposes, new bodies of planning procedures, and new types of sequencing of planning activities will help educational planning become a formal but goal-free activity. (RW)

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# NEW PERSPECTIVES

# ON PLANNING IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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# FOREWORD

Among other objectives, the Educational Dissemination Studies Program (EDSP) of the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development aims to increase the quality of and access to knowledge and technology pertaining to educational dissemination and school improvement processes. It is our belief that appropriate and powerful technologies in this area must deal directly with the way people think about and approach practical dissemination and school improvement problems and opportunities. These efforts usually begin with planning activities. Indeed, most educational dissemination and school improvement efforts rely on some form of a "planned change" strategy. Rigorous, goal-based planning has become an essential element in most large-scale efforts. The resulting plans are used in these very important ways. They provide the basis for securing support and resources for undertaking programs. They provide the rational frameworks for allocating resources and managing activities in the programs. They provide the goals and objectives by which the programs are subsequently evaluated. Consequently, planning has become a fundamental activity and a vital element in virtually all federally and state-supported dissemination or school improvement programs and projects.

However, many experienced program and project managers and many seasoned evaluators and policy analysts have long felt that something was amiss. The real world was just too complex, political, uncertain, and messy to fit the plans that were developed. Plans often were developed by persons far removed from, ignorant about, or insensitive to the realities of local conditions. Over time, program and project goals and priorities changed. Local projects either were never implemented as planned or, if implemented, they were "mutually adapted" to their host organization and its environment. The "street-level bureaucrats" who dealt with people in the schools generally knew (or learned) what would work "on their turf," but what did work was often a far cry from what was written in the plans. Thus, plans were often irrelevant, except as a facade that would give the project the appearance of being sufficiently rational, systematic, and scientific to allay the concerns of sponsors, reviewers, and other critical "outsiders."

The monograph carries two messages about this situation. The first point is that much current educational planning, especially national-level planning regarding school improvement programs, is seriously flawed. The nature of these flaws is examined and explained. The second message is that planning need not be inappropriate or misdirected. If "alternative perspectives" on planning are employed, planning can again become a relevant, useful, and highly meaningful activity in which many more persons could and should participate. Consequently, this monograph is addressed to many professionals and involved laypersons in the field

of education, and in related social fields, who are concerned with improving educational and social conditions and who would like to find better ways to plan.

This monograph found its inception at the 1979 Far West Laboratory Summer Workshop on "New Perspectives on Planning, Management, and Evaluation in School Improvement." Four participants at that workshop, David Clark (Indiana University), Ann Huff (University of Illinois), Karl Weick (Cornell University), and Sue McKibbin (Far West Laboratory), made the commitment to develop "new perspective" resources that could be disseminated broadly throughout the educational community. Under Dr. Clark's leadership, the working group was expanded to include Lynn Baker (Indiana University), Mary Carroll (a postdoctoral fellow at Phi Delta Kappa), and Linda Lotto (the National Center for Research in Vocational Education). This monograph on planning and a companion volume, Alternative Perspectives For Viewing Eductional Organizations are the fruits of their collaborative effort.

We thank Ward Mason and Rolf Lehming, Research and Educational Practice Programs at the National Institute of Education for their active support and interest in this effort. Although this project was partially supported by the National Institute of Education through a contract with EDSP, much time and effort in producing the monographs was contributed by the authors. Their efforts were indeed a personal commitment to make new perspectives available to a wider audience. We know that the authors found their work challenging and stimulating. We hope that you, the reader, will share a similar experience.

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The contributing authors received consultative assistance during the project period from Karl Weick, Graduate School of Business and Public Administration, Cornell University.

# INTRODUCTION

In the three essays that constitute this monograph, the authors hope to challenge many of your assumptions about the management function of planning. Our basic contention is that the formalized planning systems that currently dominate thought and practice in education are based upon an inappropriate representation of educational organizations. The effect of employing such a flawed planning schema has been pernicious; the management function of planning is failing in most educational organizations most of the time.

Section I argues the failure of traditional goal-based, rational, sequential planning systems and explores why they have failed. Section II discusses planning concepts and variables that better represent educational organizations and hence provide a more effective basis for planning than do traditional systems. Section III introduces alternative frameworks for thinking about the planning process through the use of metaphors, and suggests some activities and guidelines that might be employed by planners interested in such alternatives.

The purpose of this monograph is to add to the reader's repertoire of strategic and tactical responses to the planning function. No new orthodoxy is suggested or proposed. Our aim is simply to stimulate the field of educational planning to break out of the constraints under which it has been operating.

I

# IN CONSIDERATION OF GOAL-FREE PLANNING: THE FAILURE OF TRADITIONAL PLANNING SYSTEMS IN EDUCATION

David L. Clark

Let's assume that you and I have been appointed chairpersons of a committee formed to develop a three- to five-year plan for our educational organization. The issue is where to start. Surely that's not difficult. We should begin at the beginning--with an assessment of the current goals and programs of the institution. But we want to be careful; our superior has warned us not to be dominated by what has been done before. S/he has even suggested that it might be a good idea to "wipe the slate clean and proceed unburdened by the baggage of the past." So we'll make a minor adjustment: we'll first concentrate on what is to be accomplished over the next three years--our emerging goals and objectives. We can then turn to the question of operational plans, of how to do it. Since we are reasonably sophisticated, we know that a functional plan requires monitoring and quality control; we will have to build-in operating statements and program review mechanisms to assess whether the designed steps are actually being followed. Finally, we will need an evaluation system to measure the extent to which the goals are being achieved.

## A Traditional View of Planning in Educational Organizations

That seems about right for openers. Educational planning specialists would sanction our procedure. The fact of the matter is that in the community of planners in education, few dissident voices are being raised regarding the objectives of, the design for, or even the techniques and logistics of planning. The most up-to-date volume on planning and budgeting for the administrator in higher education (Anthony Gambino's 1979 monograph reporting on a 1976 survey of college administrators and state-level planners) described and discussed five planning technologies applicable to educational institutions:

1. Management Information Systems (MIS)
2. Simulation Models
3. Planning, Programming, Budgeting System (PPBS)
4. Zero-Base Budgeting (ZBB)
5. Management by Objectives (MBO)

The purposes and applicability of these systems vary; but underlying each is an integrated view of educational organizations as goal-driven, rational

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systems in which operations can and should be programmed, sequenced, monitored, and evaluated in short- and long-range planning cycles.

Traditional planning systems dominate the field of education, from the development of national policy for school improvement to planning within individual institutions. Such systems posit several requisites for planning which include:

1. A keystone role for goals* in the planning process; a clear understanding of an organization's goals or mission is an a priori condition for rational planning. Tradition views organizations by definition as goal-achieving, goal-driven entities.

2. A sequential, rational process that allows the planner and the organization to build upon preceding steps.

3. Fidelity in communication across hierarchical levels in the organization and adequate coupling among planning process steps that (a) facilitate consensus about goals, (b) allow cumulative goal building across organizational levels, and (c) provide for understanding of intentions so that these can be reflected in individual and sub-group actions.

4. A comprehensive information base on which the planning can proceed, including data on internal and external impact factors that will allow decision makers to assess alternative courses of action.

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* Goals or objectives or purposes come in a variety of forms; this variance reflects differences along several dimensions, including at least:

1. Explicit-Implicit: The extent to which the goals are expressed and sanctioned formally by the organization or simply accepted and understood by many organizational members.
2. Consentient-Dissentient: The extent to which goals are understood and shared by all organizational participants, singly and in sub-groups.
3. Substantive-Procedural: The degree of focus on organizational products or on processes.
4. Nomothetic-Idiographic: The extent to which goals are dominated by institutional or by individual aspirations.
5. Concrete-Abstract: The extent to which a goal is operational in its definition; the degree to which it can be employed effectively in defining organizational activities and setting the bounds of organizational evaluation.
6. Certain-Emergent: The extent to which flexibility is tolerated in positing goals, i.e., the willingness to assume uncertainty about achievement until activities are tried out.

The community of professional planners favors explicit, consentient, substantive, nomothetic, concrete, certain goals. Programmed planning requires programmatic input, else subsequent steps in the process are undermined.

5. Reasonable confidence in the predictability of events. Most planners assume that planning cycles can safely span a few years, if they are viewed flexibly and adjusted periodically.

6. Effective evaluation of the extent to which the plan is achieving the organization's goals. Without these data, operational plans cannot be modified to attain stated goals, or the goals adjusted to reflect more realistic performance standards.

## The Challenge of Experience

To most of the people who live and work in educational organizations, the typification of planning afforded above reflects the way it is supposed to be, not the way it is. In many cases, goal-free planning --or at least planning freed from the tyranny of goals--might better serve the purposes of national school improvement.

The Pilot State Dissemination Program. For several years, the Pilot State Dissemination Program has been attracting interest as a mechanism for moving toward an educational extension agent program in many or all states, or at least for increasing the number of human linking agents in educational dissemination programs. Sam Sieber (1974) presents some interesting evaluative data about the achievements of the Pilot Program and the manner in which it was planned and launched:

> Despite its messy theoretical foundations, it seems to have worked. I confess that no one was more surprised than I; and I am still trying to understand why.
>
> Now let me turn to the handicaps of the program...In the first place none of the staff had had any experience with information retrieval in any field. Second, there was virtually no precedent in education for the role of the extension agent, which meant there were no guidelines based on experience. Third, the clients rarely comprehended what the agents were trying to do, and in many cases tended to become alienated by the agents' halting efforts to spell out the program....Fourth, none of the agents were substantive experts, but instead had worked as teachers and administrators. And fifth, the agents had no authority to mandate change in the schools.
>
> Ultimately, however, the deficiencies in training, experience and power paid off. Precisely because the staff was devoid of rigid pre-conceptions of their roles, they were forced to engage in trial and error to please the client. (pp. 69, 71-2)

Suppose for a moment that this program had been tightly designed and monitored (a more usual situation for federal programs) or had been considered a national design for the use of extension agents. First, it would not have had "messy theoretical foundations," but instead would

have been based upon one of the rigid conceptualizations of the dissemination process available at that time. Second, its "handicaps" would hardly have been tolerated because they would have violated the current conventional wisdom. Even if those eventually beneficial handicaps had been allowed to exist in the program, there is a good possibility that the entire program would have been scrapped at the end of the first year or two; for as Sieber reported, "These deficiencies were responsible for great confusion and demoralization during the first half-year of the program. Agents were ignored by teachers, resented by administrators, and even black-balled in some districts." (p. 72) Surely by then it would have been "clear" to program monitors that (1) quality control standards were not being met and (2) program goals were not being attained.

But the Pilot State Dissemination Program was a modest trial effort. Since it was not a "serious" comprehensive attempt to establish educational extension agents on a rational basis, the sponsors and educators involved had the space to learn from this experience, rather than die with it. The fact that this was a loosely structured, trial-and-error effort allowed for the discovery of goals through activities aimed at serving clients.

If the Pilot State Program were an exception to the rule, it might have little to tell us about planning. But my guess is that most of you recognized the experience reported by Sieber. The circumstances confronting the Sieber group were conditions often associated with school improvement efforts: uncertain conceptual foundations, weak technology, unclear preferences, ambiguous authority relationships, inexperienced and/or changing program participants. In fact, some contemporary organizational theorists argue that these are the circumstances encountered in most educational organizations most of the time (Cohen, March, & Olson, 1972). The levels of predictability, specificity, and measurability required for most rational planning technologies are frequently simply not present in educational organizations.

## The Challenge of Theory and Research

Practitioners have long chafed under the strictures of goal-based, rational planning systems. Professional planners have sought to loosen these strictures; or fine-tune the systems' techniques; or supplement them with added entries; or rationalize the failures of the planning systems in use. Meanwhile, organizational theorists have been challenging the appropriateness of goal-based, rational, sequential planning on the basis of its assumptions, to wit:

1. Not only is it unnecessary to insist that goals are an a priori condition for organizational planning, it is unreasonable to assume high levels of consensus about goals within organizations. In fact, it may not even be useful to retain the goal-based paradigm as a conception of organizations.

2. The image of educational institutions as rational bureaucracies might be inaccurate and unrealistic.

3. The linkage and responsiveness assumed by traditional planning is seldom found in educational organizations. They are almost always loosely coupled systems.

If one or more of these challenges were accurate, it would mean that the failure of goal-based, rational planning systems is grounded not in technical details of the systems but in the discrepancy between the assumptions underlying them and the reality of what actually occurs in educational organizations. The logic-in-use in most educational organizations most of the time may be so disparate from the reconstructed logic supporting rational planning systems that no level of improvement in the design or implementation of such systems could significantly affect the usefulness of the systems.

Let us briefly consider the nature of the above challenges.

Goals and the goal-based organizational paradigm. Organizational theorists have been troubled for years over the place of goals in understanding organizations. Almost a decade ago (1972), March challenged the a priori nature of goals by noting:

> One of the primary ways in which the goals of an organization are developed is by interpreting the decisions it makes....As a result, decisions should not be seen as flowing directly or strictly from a pre-existent set of objectives. (p. 427)

The concept of goals or objectives used as a way to rationalize or explain past organizational activities is simply incongruous in the context of sequential, goal-based planning or management systems.

But the theoretical challenge to the role of goals in organizational life goes deeper than the issue of sequencing; it involves questions of consensus, fixedness, and utility.

> Organizational actions at best seem to be goal-interpreted. Goals are sufficiently diverse, the future is sufficiently uncertain, and the actions on which goal statements could center are sufficiently unclear that goal statements explain a relatively small portion of the variance in action. It is probable that goals are tied more closely to actual activities than is commonly recognized and that they are more productively understood as summaries of previous actions. (Weick, 1979, p. 239)

Some theoreticians have found the paradigm of goal-based organizations of such little heuristic value that they adjudge it misleading.

> Almost invariably, studies demonstrate the fruitlessness of understanding organizations as goal-attaining devices. The paradigm retains its primacy not because of the insights it yields, but because

> it is embedded so deeply in our consciousness that it is a reality rather than a theoretical construct to be discarded when it ceases to enlighten. (Georgiou, 1973, p. 292)

Whether one is willing to challenge the definition of organizations as goal-attaining entities or wishes merely to question the primacy of goals in specifying organizational activities, it seems clear that the place of goals in understanding and planning for organizations can hardly be assumed to be axiomatic.

The rational organization. Traditional planning systems rely as heavily on the concept of the rational decision-making organization as they do on the view of organizations as goal-based entities. Recent theory and research suggest that educational institutions might better be characterized as organized anarchies than rational bureaucracies. The essence of the organized anarchy can be portrayed thus:

> In the [anarchical] organization it is difficult to impute a set of preferences to the decision situation that satisfies the standard consistency requirements for a theory of choice. The organization operates on the basis of a variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences. It can be described better as a loose collection of ideas than as a coherent structure; it discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences.
>
> The second property is unclear technology. Although the organization manages to survive and even produce, its own processes are not understood by its members. It operates on the basis of simple trial-and-error procedures, the residue of learning from the accidents of past experience, and pragmatic inventions of necessity.
>
> The third property is fluid participation. Participants vary in the amount of time and effort they devote to different domains; involvement varies from one time to another. As a result, the boundaries of the organization are uncertain and changing; the audiences and decision makers for any particular kind of choice change capriciously. (Cohen, March, and Olson, 1972, p. 1)

Two critical observations should be made here. Firstly, the above characteristics are native to educational institutions.

> These properties of organized anarchy have been identified often in studies of organizations. They are characteristic of any organization in part--part of the time. They are particularly conspicuous in public, educational, and illegitimate organizations. (Cohen, March, and Olson, 1972, p. 1)

Secondly, the effect of ignoring these characteristics in the planning process is not neutral but negative. In their study of planning in the National Institute of Education, Sproull, Weiner, and Wolf (1978) noted:

> The planning, even though performed by able analysts, was of little use once the institute began to accumulate experience. Indeed, we

> have suggested that the commitment to planning was itself the cause of significant mischief. (p. 221)

To plan as if an organization has clear-cut preferences when it does not is to act as if events will occur or choices will be made systematically when they are in fact unpredictable (or predictable on different grounds). Of course, the consequence of such action is built-in failures in performance.

Tightly coupled systems. Traditional planning systems assume that the organization in question is tightly coupled in a variety of ways, i.e.:

1. By processes and products - The sequential connectedness of goals, programs, actions, and output (or problems, solutions, and decisions) is integral to such technical systems as MBO or PPBS.

2. By organizational units - The concept that the success or failure of one organizational unit affects the success or failure of others in the same institution creates the condition for planning by consensus, which is critical to traditional planning systems. Such systems must assume that there are organizational goals that transcend sub-unit or individual goals, and that the interdependency of the system will suggest agreement to such goals by sub-units or individuals on the basis of enlightened self-interest.

3. Across organizational levels - The very concept of organizational goals implies that there is a cumulation across organizational hierarchical levels that allows for the emergence of supra-goals.

Recent studies of educational institutions, especially institutions of higher education, indicate that such a cumulation is an infrequent phenomenon in these organizations. Departmental units abound in which success or failure is independent of, or in direct conflict with, the success of most other units in the university. The continuity of university planning processes is frequently obscure. Communication across hierarchical levels lacks fidelity; it seems often to be disconnected altogether.

Conclusions. These theoretical challenges to the pervasive goal-based, rational, sequential perspective have sufficient force to suggest that the requisite conditions for institution-wide goal-based planning are seldom found in educational organizations. Moreover, the conditions of institutional uncertainty and unpredictability signaled by the newer organizational perspectives are undoubtedly exacerbated during periods when the organization is attempting to modify its activities or to restructure itself internally or externally. This makes especially problematic the use of traditional planning systems for interorganizational arrangements to effect school improvement. Yet this is what has been most commonly done, as in the case of the School Study Council movement, Teacher Centers, and the Teacher Corps program. Anyone who has worked in such an interorganizational network is likely to feel that the description of an organized anarchy (characterized by ambiguous preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation or involvement) better fits his/her experience than does the rational, sequential framework.

It must be obvious by now that the author is convinced that the assumption of rationality accounts for the failure of existing planning systems in educational organizations. In sum:

1. In most educational organizations most of the time, goal-based planning models are orderly facades that inhibit the management function of planning.

2. Their use is especially suspect in periods of planning for change, because during this period the organization is experiencing maximum uncertainty.

3. Their use is most damaging in planning for interorganizational arrangements for school improvement since, under those conditions, several organizations are being brought together into a macro-level organized anarchy.

## A National-Level Planning Task

Back on page 1, we began by imagining ourselves confronted with an intraorganizational planning task. Now, move to the national level task and imagine that we are assigned responsibility for developing a design for school improvement. For example, say we've been called upon to use the Pilot State Dissemination Program, described earlier, as the basis for devising a national system of educational extension agents. If no one has yet suggested to us that we use a goal-based, rational model to carry out our assignment, they soon will, if for no other reason than the salability of our product to the Office of Management and Budget and Congress when we seek appropriations to support the program.

Table 1 describes the conditions needed to support a goal-based planning effort at the national level (column one) and the conditions with which we are most likely to be confronted (column two). Let us briefly consider what might happen to us if we attempted to work within such a situation.

Program goals. The clash of perspectives on (and goals for) a national extension agent program will likely begin with differing views of (a) the process of diffusion in education; (b) the role of human agents in that process; and (c) the optimum role of various educational agencies that might be involved in the program. This preliminary sparring will seem tame when compared to the conflict about program goals that will emerge after eligible funding agencies have been identified. Some of the potential participating agencies will view the extension agents as direct competitors; others will assume that the organizational placement of the agents will affect the equilibrium of educational power in their state or region; none will see this new program as being equivalent in importance to their central organizational task; and few will accept the notion that national program goals should be embraced, even if they decide to compete for funds under the program.

Table 1

Context of National Planning for Schcol Improvement Programs

| Requisite Conditions for Goal-based Rational Planning | Likely Conditions Confronting National-Level Planners of School Improvement Programs |
|---|---|
| 1. Concurrence in and understanding of desired end-states, i.e., goals of the school improvement programs. As argued earlier, a programmed planning approach will require goals that are explicit, consentient, substantive, nomothetic, concrete, and certain. | 1. Multiple perspectives on end-states ranging from concurrence, through disinterest, to hostility depending upon:<br>a) Differing theoretical and practical constructions of how to attain school improvement through an extension agent program.<br>b) Varying intra-organizational goals and objectives in school improvement.<br>c) Varying individual goals among participants within and across agencies.<br>d) Subordinate status of the school improvement function in most educational agencies.<br>e) Competing interorganizational objectives and program roles in school improvement. |
| 2. Concurrence in and understanding of program activities specified to attain the school improvement goals. | 2. Multiple perspectives on the proposed program activities based upon the variations noted in (1) a-e above, plus: Uncertain technology; inability to assert the "right" technology;. unpredictable outcomes. |
| 3. Interorganizational linkages characteristic of or approximating an operating system, i.e., some definable hierarchical relationships; regularized interactions across units; the possibility of faithful communication and program monitoring. | 3. Few binding authority relationships across institutions, almost none involving knowledge utilization or school improvement; few to no sanctions outside the funds available to a specific program; no functional flow of responsibilities or even regularized communication among agencies; negotiated, ad hoc agency relationships; loose couplings among loosely coupled institutions. Varying interest in the success of the program by program participants. Efforts to subordinate national program interests to foster local interests. |
| 4. Empirical data on the resources and potential productivity of participating agents and agencies; evaluative data on competitive plans; data on internal and external impact factors that will influence the success or failure of the plan. | 4. Incomplete but improving data base, e.g., NIE Databook, Registry of Research Organizations in Education. Little or no data on the match between national program needs and the contextual features of field agencies; incomplete data from evaluations of previous school improvement programs in education, e.g., evaluations of NDN, RDU, State Capacity Building Program. Disinclination of policy makers to base judgments on limited available data. Crude futures studies technology; incomplete knowledge of relevant external impact factors; bad track record on predictions about known factors. |
| 5. Effective process and product evaluation data from which program adjustments can be made to facilitate goal attainment. | 5. Unwillingness to provide evaluative data; threatened program participants who wish to exhibit success to ensure future funding; program achievements unrelated to stated program goals; unintended effects. |

Now if we and our national planning colleagues were casual about the role of goals in planning our program, the consequences of having so many unshared, unrealistic, conflictive goals might be minimized. But we will not be, and for a very good reason. The goals are designed to offer (frequently spurious) assurances to program supporters that they are "buying what they paid for." To do this our goals must be explicit, concrete, certain--they must be capable of providing credibility for the program. Once posed, the goals will dominate the rules and regulations governing the grant and contract programs. These, of course, are designed to effect the attainment of the goals, and our program will ultimately be assessed in relation to the criterion of goal attainment. The participating agencies will have to adjust to this situation by attempting to avoid or overlook conflicting goals, and by manipulating goals, when possible, to their local purposes.

Could we do better by paying more direct attention to the actual conditions under which we are operating? Of course we could, and it can be done at varying levels of conservatism or risk.

1. At a relatively conservative level, emphasis can be placed on developing consensus around a shared vision of the future rather than pressing for an operational definition of program goals--that is to say, the goals can be stated in a less concrete manner. This step requires only modest conceptual restructuring on the part of the program planner, but its consequence is to reduce the possibility of closely linking ends and means. On the positive side of the ledger, this step should increase consensus, reduce conflict between and within potential participating agencies, and increase the likelihood of flexibility in goal interpretation.

2. A slightly less conventional alternative is: to introduce intentional dissensus into the goal statements. This stance will not only recognize disparate goal orientations, contextual features, and program and personal strengths; it will also try to take advantage of these differences and accumulate trial-and-error evidence on alternative end-states. This approach avoids the usually fruitless search for interagency consensus and accepts an emergent vision of what the program can accomplish.

3. Probably the least conventional posture in national planning is to switch from substantive to procedural goals. In such a case, our planner argues that it is more important to bring the resources of agencies and agents to bear on the task of establishing an effective diffusion program than to posit a set of substantive goals that will be attained through such a program. This technique tolerates the notion that program success might be measured by (a) the extent to which the program maximized the participation of educational agencies in the system and took advantage of the unique strengths of these agencies; or (b) the number of provocative alternative processes invented by participants; or (c) the extent to which participants became better able to participate in educational diffusion efforts, rather than by (d) school or classroom changes that could be traced to the system.

Program activities. The problems caused by traditional planning systems are compounded as one moves step-by-step through the planning process. The more explicit, concrete, and certain the program goals--the more the planner acted at the outset as if s/he knew what the program outcome would be--the more the planner must now act as if s/he knows what to do to accomplish those needs. And just as the goals implied consensus, so must the planner assume agreement on means. But since various means will almost certainly advantage some program participants at the expense of others, such agreement is highly unlikely.

The essential nature of a programmed planning system is confounded if the means of attaining its ends are uncertain; there needs to be a "right" technology. But the fact is that, in our example, we do not know how best to employ educational extension agents in a national dissemination program. When confronted with a like dilemma, most national programs employ the gambit of asserting elements of the technology (usually not core elements) to be potent by fiat. This provides an orderly facade for the program. It also creates the appearance of rules which are needed to ensure program outcomes, e.g., "Extension agent roles and activities will be based on regional needs assessments;" or "Each subset of x local educational agencies served by the extension agent program will elect a program advisory board with representation from the LEAs, local communities, and higher education institutions in the region." Obviously, such requirements do not assure goal attainment; but they simply summon up conventional wisdom about operations in the face of uncertain technology. Of course, as such requirements proliferate and are made more specific, they are more likely to conflict with local organizational goals, exceed local resources, and be inconsistent with the contextual features of local organizations.

Might we imagine a more flexible planning posture? Of course! If diverse resources and unclear technology were assumed, we could proceed to turn these apparent obstacles to our advantage by attempting to fit the activities to the field agencies, and to experiment with alternative technologies. A state grant, for example, might build upon the SEA's educational data storage and retrieval capacity and its coordinative position in the state, while a grant to an intermediate service agency or a school of education might involve the actual support of agents working in the field. The appropriateness of any such strategy would vary dramatically from state to state, depending upon the history and success of intra-state agencies in dissemination and school improvement activities. The key is to design a support structure that builds on the strengths in the field, rather than reordering existing structures to fit preconceived notions of who should be doing what and how. If unclear technology and uncertain resources are assumed, a strength inventory might be a much higher priority than a needs assessment.

## Case Editorial

It's just about time for the planners in the audience to arise en masse to assert that they would surely do what has just been described; why, that constitutes nothing more than adjusting to the

realities of the situation. But this, of course, is not true. They would not make such adjustments. If you examine most national- and state-level planning efforts (and most intra-institutional plans in higher education), you will discover rigorous sequential, goal-based plans. You will also find organizational participants laboring over, around, and under these designs so that the work of the organization can go on with a modicum of efficiency.

Professional planners in education should be judged by what they say when they write about planning; what they advocate as the technology of planning; and what they produce as a consequence of planning. The vast majority of planners assume conceptual, technical, and operational rationality; they merely grant exceptions to the rule represented by the goal-dominated, rational perspective post-facto when they are forced to, rather than examining the rule itself.

Institutional linkages. Probably the most naive move ever made by national-level planners regarding institutional linkages for school improvement was the temporary acceptance of the Research-Development-Diffusion-Adoption (RDDA) continuum, along with the notion that educational agencies would be comfortable with their assigned roles along the continuum. Add to that the assumption that the multiple agencies participating in the program would share the concern of the sponsors for the program's success, and you have all the ingredients necessary to foster a conflictive relationship between sponsor and grantee.

Traditional rational planning models require some systematic pattern of interorganizational linkages that are either "natural" to the organizations involved or induced by the external program being planned. But Guba and Clark (1974) observe that:

- The overwhelming majority of the agencies and individuals tend to view KPU [knowledge production and utilization] activity as subordinate to their primary-line activity.
- The agencies are essentially independent of one another. Each agency, if it wishes to cooperate with one or more other agencies in a KPU activity, must rely on persuasion to interest the companion agency.
- The fact of organizational independence has the consequence that many of the organizations play overlapping roles [in KPU].
- There is no function flow across organizational boundaries. ...KPU is in effect a cottage industry.
- The basic relational posture is one of competition. Cooperation is rarely seen except in the form of temporary alliances.
- Activity relationships are minimal among the involved KPU agencies.

> The KPU community is...a number of more or less independent and coequal members, who may from time to time find it helpful to form temporary alliances but who in the main retain their independence, shun authority and activity relationships, and engage in as many different kinds of KPU activities as seem to be needed and feasible for them to maintain self-sufficiency. (pp. 43-5)

The pattern of linkages across educational organizations is indeed most accurately described as loose couplings among loosely coupled institutions. Cooperative arrangements or hierarchical linkage for school improvement programs are almost always synthetic relationships created for the sole purpose of the school improvement effort, and consequently it is not surprising how erratic and impermanent are the patterns of communication, interaction, and monitoring.

Does this mean that no joint relationships are possible in the design of school improvement efforts? No, but it does mean that it is probably unrealistic to attempt to mandate a particular regularized pattern of interaction, unless you intend to force-feed it forever. This systems view is costly and difficult to implement because it is so unrealistic. In the description of the KPU community above, the authors contrasted those who held a systems view with those having a configurational view of institutional linkages. A goal-based planner would adhere to the systems perspective, whereas the goal-free planner would be a configurationist.

> The systems proponent would regard such non-systems characteristics as obstacles to be overcome, barriers to be struck down, conditions to be ameliorated. The configurationist, conversely, is more likely to see them as channels through which KPU activity must be guided; constraints by which the creative bursts of KPU must be disciplined; keys which must be utilized to unlock KPU potential. In short, the systems proponent views such characteristics as intractable; the configurationist sees them as malleable. (Guba and Clark, p. 61)

Data requirements. The technology of education can easily be demonstrated to be unclear, the preferences to be problematic. Surely this prescribes the avoidance of comprehensive plans, master plans, long-range plans--anything that inhibits the modification or alteration of a given course of action would be inappropriate to conditions in the field. The encouragement of divergent approaches stimulates the growth of knowledge about a low-technology field, even if those divergent approaches are not planned variations.

The data demanded by programmatic planning are not available in education, any more than in most social process arenas. To pretend that they are may offer a kind of temporary security, but the unpredictability of events in the field will eventually overwhelm that security and precipitate yet another "failure."

Program evaluation. Many evaluators and planners have made incredible assumptions about program evaluation. First and most incredibly, they have insisted that program participants cooperate in gathering--or actually providing--evaluative data on their activities and outcomes. Since an agency's continued participation in the program and acquisition of local incentives frequently depends on such evaluative outcomes, we might suspect a tendency toward self-reported positive evaluations. Almost as strange is the assumption that evaluation should assess the extent to which a priori program goals have been attained. But in the interim between the statement of goals and their evaluation, the participating agencies have most likely adapted the program to fit their local and individual needs; so whatever they have achieved is unlikely to be perceived by goal-bound evaluation.

Several years ago (1972), Scrivin noted that goal-based evaluation designs are of limited value because:

1. Announced goals are often set at a grandiose level.

2. Goals are usualiy stated vaguely.

3. The shifting of goals midway through a project creates problems, resentments, and a sense of failure.

4. Evaluation planning that emphasizes goals often overlooks anticipated outcomes (not mere side effects) that were simply not mentioned in the stated goals.

Obviously, alternative goal-free evaluation plans are feasible, but the goal-based planner rejects these since they are not congruent with the image of a rational, sequential planning process.

Conclusions. Goal-based, rational planning is easiest to criticize when it is applied to complex planning situations. The difficulties inherent in such planning are amplified as one moves to interorganizational and finally national-level planning ventures. But from a socio-psychological point of view, the press for systematic planning undoubtedly increases as the complexity of the planning task increases. In national planning ventures, large amounts of money and many people are involved and Congress and the administration want pre-specified results on schedule.

In discussing the multiple meanings associated with loose coupling, Weick (1980) has stated, "If that plurality of nuance and meaning makes it difficult to do science, tough. The world wasn't arranged to suit our purposes and nothing is gained by our fury at or denial of this intransigence" (p.4). We will paraphrase: If the uncertainty and unpredictability of complex planning situations make it difficult to apply simplistic planning techniques, too bad. The world wasn't arranged to suit the needs of planners and policy makers for programmed processes and outputs. Nothing is gained by railing against the fact that the real world of organizational life is populated by people and forces not susceptible to programming.

Interposition: Alternatives

By now it must be obvious that the authors of this monograph are serious about their objections to current perspectives on organizational planning. We are dealing with a critical phenomenon of organizational life, a central management function. The next two essays will attempt to reconstruct organizational planning in ways that may at first seem unfamiliar, but that will eventually cause you to nod and say--we hope--"that's right, that's the way it works."

In Section II, you will be introduced to a simplified but still complex set of planning concepts and variables. They will not constitute a model or system, but they will broaden your scope of understanding of planning in organizational life.

In Section III, you will be challenged with some new metaphors for planning.

The intent of the entire monograph is to persuade you to move from current inadequate planning schema to a more comprehensive and dynamic view of planning in organizational life.

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II

# UNDERSTANDING PLANNING IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

# GENERATIVE CONCEPTS AND KEY VARIABLES

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If planning activities in educational organizations are represented imperfectly by contemporary planning models and systems, is it possible to do them greater justice with an alternative model? The authors believe there are indeed more accurate and useful ways to represent planning than the traditional models currently in use, but at this stage in our thinking the notion of a model or system appears to (1) exceed our understanding of planning activities and (2) press for more simplification than is appropriate to the process; i.e., accuracy is presently being sacrificed to attain simplicity.

Instead of positing a model, we will describe a number of planning concepts and variables which, we feel, conform better to the realities of life in educational organizations. The more complex view of the planning process here reflected can be summarized conceptually, methodologically, and operationally as follows:

1. Conceptually, planning is not a "synthetic" management function but an essential part of the way in which individuals in organizations make sense of and create their organizational reality.

2. Methodologically or tactically, the attempt to fit organizations to a planning model is less useful than the assumption that an appropriate design for planning can be generated for and adapted to the planning efforts of every organization.

3. Operationally, all organizational participants should be considered to be active planners. Consequently, those individuals assigned formal administrative responsibilities for planning should view themselves less as managers, initiators, and monitors and more as stimulators, facilitators, and orchestrators.

In the upcoming sections of this paper, five clusters of organizational planning variables will be discussed:

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1. Focus of planning
2. Uses of planning
3. Processes of planning
4. Context for planning
5. Outcomes of planning.

The traditional image of planning emphasizes a form of future scanning that is initiated by management and wed to organizational decision making. Over time, tradition argues, plans perform the function of keeping the organization on course in accomplishing its projective goals. All around the country, local educational agencies, colleges, and universities form task forces or commissions to generate five-year plans. Government agencies project program effects across future budget cycles. But this traditional view accounts for only a small percentage of the planning activity to be observed in organizational settings. It tends to ignore the planning activity of individuals not designated by the organization as planners. It misses the bulk of the organizationally sanctioned planning that is decentralized within project and work groups. It tends to ignore planning efforts undertaken for purposes other than the service of decision making. One would expect such simplistic thinking to lead to inaccuracy, and it does.

Focus of Planning

> We need a modified view of planning. Planning in organizations has many virtues, but a plan can often be more effective as an interpretation of past decisions than as a program for future ones. It can be used as part of an organization's efforts to develop a new consistent theory of itself that incorporates the mix of recent actions into a moderately comprehensive structure of goals. ...In an organization that wants to continue to develop new objectives, a manager needs to be relatively tolerant of the idea that he will discover the meaning of yesterday's action in the experiences and interpretations of today. (March and Olsen, 1976, p. 80)

This suggests that the picture of the planner as a future scanner within an organization should be complemented by the image of planner as historian (interpreting and rationalizing past actions) and social scientist or institutional researcher (assessing current trials and errors and recording current actions). The use of planning for the specification of sought-after future states should be balanced by a view of planning that:

- Makes rational where the organization has been, and
- Assesses where and what the organization is.

This broadening of the focus of planning activities to include past- and present-oriented emphases enlarges the range of uses, processes, and outcomes for planning. Similarly, opening up the notion of planner to include images such as historian or social scientist allows us to think of that role in broader and more flexible ways.

Uses of Planning

The image of planning as serving the decision-making functions in organizations is accurate but incomplete. The March and Olsen study of 42 colleges and universities suggests that to understand planning we should imagine a broad set of uses for planning activities within educational organizations, to wit:

1. Plans become symbols. How are we doing? Where are we going? An organization that is failing can announce a plan to succeed....

2. Plans become advertisements. What is frequently called a "plan" by a university is really an investment brochure. It is an attempt to persuade private and public donors of the attractiveness of the institution....

3. Plans become games. In an organization in which goals and technology are unclear, plans and the insistence on plans become an administrative test of will....If an administrator wished to avoid saying "yes" to everything, but has no basis for saying "no" to anything, he tests the commitment of the department by asking for a plan.

4. Plans become excuses for interaction. As several students of planning have noted, the results of the process of planning are usually more important than the plan. The development of a plan forces some discussion and may induce some interest in and commitment to relatively low-priority activities in the departments/schools. (pp. 195-6)

Building on the March and Olsen study, we encourage uses of planning at least as broad as the following:

- Symbolic planning - for the purpose of generating an organizational hallmark or ethos; or as a short- or long-range substitute for action.

- Advertisable planning - for the purpose of selling the institution by representing its past achievements, capacity, or style.

- Rationalistic planning - for the purpose of interpreting past activities in the light of present or likely near-future interests.

- Political planning - to provide an orderly framework for organizational stakeholders, inside and outside the institution, to negotiate their interests; or to build consensus and support for current and proposed organizational activities.

- Procedural planning - to create the occasion for selected individuals and groups within or external to the organization to discuss, and perhaps modify, positions on supra-group issues; to involve organizational members or external reference groups in non-action-oriented discussions of institutional activities, purposes, futures, and goals.

- Decisional planning - to assist organizational decision making, i.e., establishing criteria that organizational members will accept, at least tentatively, for evaluating resource allocations, recruitment, time use, etc.

- Futurist planning - for the purpose of generating alternative future end-states for the organization, contrasting these with likely organizational futures and identifying interventions that would modify the likely organizational future.

As the diversity of uses for planning increases, planning should become more serviceable to the administrator as a management tool.

## Processes of Planning

The previous section dealt with planning as a formal, organization-wide activity primarily initiated and controlled by management. But this is unrealistic. All individuals in an organization are involved in planning, singly and in groups, all the time. After all, what is being planned is the life space of organizational members.

We will begin this section with an examination of formal or organizationally legitimated involvement in the planning process; then proceed to a depiction of planning processes as they occur at multiple levels of the organization; and turn, finally, to a general discussion of planning as an organizational function.

Formal involvement in planning. All individuals in an organization are involved in planning. The question is the extent to which the organization recognizes and legitimates that involvement. Some individuals are supposed to plan: it is their legitimated and expected organizational role (e.g., Directors of Planning, or autonomous staff such as project directors and classroom teachers). Other individuals are formally excluded from planning. These are usually the "workers" or doers in the organization (e.g., students, support staff, and other lower-echelon employees). In between are individuals whose involvement varies from voluntary (the concerned and interested individual who proffers involvement) to mandatory (an individual temporarily assigned to take on planning activities).

Organizational sanction or legitimation of individual involvement in planning frequently affirms and tightens the bond between the individual and the organization. On the other hand, organizations that deny legitimate planning involvement to individual stakeholders risk alienating them. And if individual stakeholders eschew involvement in planning, that action should provoke concern on the part of managers, because intentionally uninvolved participants are probably (a) exhibiting estrangement from the organization or (b) expressing disenchantment with the formal planning process.

Levels and planning. The traditional image of inter-level organizational planning is naive in its tidiness. It assumes that the primary product of planning is a single plan for the entire organization. Input from each sub-unit in the organization is therefore necessary for building

the supra-plan. Formal organizational planning begins with individual unit plans which are aggregated, negotiated, and smoothed (and sometimes obfuscated) as they proceed upward level by level, eventually resulting in an organization-wide planning document. Traditional planning schemes for multi-level organizations assume (1) the desirability of a single plan; (2) the necessity of basic input from organizational sub-units; and (3) the cumulative nature of those inputs.

## Case Example

> In State A last year, the Higher Education Commission requested that within 18 months each public university submit a five-year plan for its campus. The major state university began its process by convening the deans to agree on a content outline for the plan for each school and college on campus. Within two weeks, the deans had convened their department heads to organize the planning task by departments. Within larger departments, the chairpersons assigned responsibility to faculty in areas of specialization.
>
> The process is already bearing fruit. As of this date, departmental plans are in the hands of the deans, being homogenized into college and school plans. They will shortly be forwarded to the president's office to be "edited" into a campus-wide document. By the time the document arrives in the hands of the Commission, it should be smoothed to the point where it will be impossible for any individual campus sub-unit to recognize whether its contribution was used, ignored, or overruled.

Few organizations are so tightly coupled that the sum of the plans of their several parts equals a plan for the whole. Planning might be more realistically pictured as occurring at multiple levels for multiple purposes in most organizations most of the time. For instance, while the five-year plan was coming into being in our Case Example,

- individual faculty members were composing and submitting research, development, and training proposals to external funding agencies;
- the dean's office was negotiating the status of four faculty positions that had become available;
- two departments were planning a joint degree program to offset dwindling enrollments;
- a member of the president's staff was negotiating a new formula with the research foundation for the return of overhead costs on contracts to departments generating R&D funds.

Because the purposes of planning at different levels vary; because sub-units in most organizations are loosely coupled in many function areas most of the time and in some function areas all of the time; and because in many instances legitimate interests of sub-groups and individuals cannot be negotiated across units without damaging institutional effectiveness, the concept

of cumulative planning by levels is inappropriate for most planning ventures most of the time. We get a more workable picture if we admit many different kinds of planning:

1. Pervasive - the effect is of consequence on an organization-wide basis.

2. Encapsulated - the effect is of consequence only to the individual or sub-unit engaged in planning.

3. Contained - the effect is restricted, often intentionally, to a sub-part of the organization, a particular function area, or a particular external constituency.

4. Spontaneous - the activity emerges, sometimes overnight, in response to a stimulus of interest to one or more institutional members, e.g., a federal request for a proposal.

5. Continuous - units and individuals never cease the process of negotiating their preferences and activities.

6. Loosely coupled - plans may or may not intersect, cumulate, or interact across levels or between units.

Planning as a "natural" organizational function. Planning is in fact omnipresent; all organizational participants are planning a more satisfactory organizational environment for themselves every day. Tradition conceives of organizational planning as controlled by institutional rather than individual interests; but actually, individuals in the organization are constantly balancing their interests with those of the institution. If organizational reality is viewed as an output of individual interaction and activity, then planning is more appropriately viewed as (1) a political process--the ordering and re-ordering, through negotiation, of the preferences and activities of the organizational stakeholders, singly and in groups; and/or (2) a sense-making process by which organizational stakeholders order and define their lifespaces within the organization.

Planning is political because it is concerned with the interests and activities of the organization--with what will and what will not be done. The commitment of resources to specific activity areas precludes those resources being used for other functions. Planning can be viewed usefully as a political process through which (1) the various competing interests of the stakeholders are negotiated; and (2) the tensions engendered by those competing interests are balanced.

Or imagine planning as the avenue by which organizational participants make sense of their experiences with and within the organization. In this view of planning as sensemaking and organizing, one assumes that individuals are regularly engaged in:

1. the development of individual cause maps as they attempt to remove equivocality from their streams of experience

2. the negotiation of collective causes maps as participants attempt to remove residual equivocality by interlocking the behaviors of individuals and coalitions of individuals

3. the attempted implementation of content contained in the collective cause maps. (Frost and Hayes, Note 1)

This perspective moves the processes of planning into the natural stream of organizational life.

These more flexible views suggest a modified role for the organizationally designated planner. As that individual begins to see the planning process as political and sensemaking, s/he is likely to allow much negotiation to occur without intervention or overmanagement. This "liberated" designated planner would assume that the outputs of the above natural organizational processes should be the inputs that guide and inform formal organizational processes. S/he ought therefore to be adept at (1) identifying collective cause maps and (2) tracking these back to individual cause maps. (This is necessary because intervention and formal negotiation are more likely to occur when collective cause maps are at issue, both within and across sub-units; and because collective information may misrepresent individual viewpoints, and reliance on the collective map alone will probably exclude critical perceptions of influential participants.)

## Context for Planning

### Case Example

> Comment made by an R&D center director to a site visiting team: "You simply don't understand what it is we propose to do during this planning cycle. This is not just another planning effort for us. I have told my staff to wipe the slate clean--no holds barred. Nothing that we have done constrains what we will do. And what we intend to do is to respond to the most compelling research problems in our field. This is a fresh start for us."

Of course, that is not true! Everything an R&D center has done influences what it will do; and what it is as an organization determines to a substantial extent what it will become. Planning is context-bound and situationally oriented. This section will not attempt to reiterate typical discussions of contextual variables related to planning (organizational type, size, locus of control); but we will discuss briefly three sets of variables that are less frequently considered:

1. Coupledness
2. Resource base
3. Activities/audiences.

Coupledness. Most traditional planning models assume that intraorganizational coupledness is a constant and extra-organizational coupledness is a variable. For most organizations, this is not correct. Not only are both forms of coupledness variables; they are discrete variables, i.e., the degree of internal coupledness does not predict and is not predicted by the organization's level of external coupledness.

The impact of a loosely coupled system on goal-based, rational planning models is profound. Such models assume coupledness of processes and products, of organizational units and levels. The tighter the coupledness, the more likely that a programmed planning model will work effectively. This single variable explains why rational planning models are more likely to work effectively at the sub-unit or project level than at the organization-wide level; or on relatively narrow, short-range planning designs rather than comprehensive, complex designs; or in organizations tightly coupled to specific audiences rather than in those loosely coupled to diffuse client groups. Rational models require fidelity in communication among units and across levels.

Resource base. An organization's resource base can vary along several dimensions. Resources may be expanding or shrinking--a measure of stability. They can be adequate or inadequate to maintain present activities and/or to accomodate emerging activity areas--the criterion of sufficiency. The resources may or may not be manipulable by the organization at its discretion--they may vary on the criterion of flexibility. They may be relatively dependable or risky from year to year or period to period--the criterion of reliability.

The impact of these conditions on planning is illustrated by the current condition of many school districts. Their absolute resources are shrinking. This has led to a perception (whether justified or not) of resource insufficiency. As a result, planning documents issuing from such agencies over the past few years have concentrated almost entirely on financial survival. It's a nearly hopeless task to try to engage faculty in planning for new interest areas and innovate programs, unless the new activity supplements the resource base. Overall, the effect on many schools has been that innovative planning activity has declined (even though innovation might actually be the key to survival).

Activities/audiences. Organizational activities and audiences introduce varying degrees of uncertainty into the planning process. The degree of uncertainty defines which planning procedures are appropriate. Some organizational activities can be described as sustaining. They have already been demonstrated to be certain or successful; for this particular organization, they are prestige outputs sought by a relatively stable (though not necessarily totally satisfied) client group. Other activities (and hence audiences) can be pictured as emerging. They are at a trial stage. Even more conjectural and uncertain programs are projected. They may or may not ever be tested in the portfolio of the organization, but they are competitive candidates for inclusion.

Organizations vary markedly in the extent to which their activities and audiences can be profiled across these categories. Some are almost totally dominated by sustaining activities and audiences. Their level of certainty will predictably be high, calling for more programmed planning. This programmed mode would probably be inappropriate for an organization characterized almost entirely by emerging or projected activities and audiences.

In many organizations, of course, the full range of activity and audience types will be present all the time. In such cases, different approaches to planning are appropriate to different activities within the same organization.

Approaches to planning: mixing and matching. In a discussion of the design of implementation approaches in educational organizations, Paul Berman (1979) argues for characterizing the policy situation by institutional and change variables in order to match the implementation strategy to a given policy situation. The following table describes the Berman structure:

Table 1

Matching Implementation Approaches to Policy Situations

| Situational Parameter | Implementation Approach | |
|---|---|---|
| | Programmed | Adaptive |
| Scope of Change | Minor | Major |
| Certainty of Technology or Theory | Certain Within Risk | Uncertain |
| Conflict Over Policy's Goals and Means | Low Conflict | High Conflict |
| Structure of Institutional Setting | Tightly Coupled | Loosely Coupled |
| Stability of Environment | Stable | Unstable |

(Berman, 1979, p. 34)

One can imagine an analog table constructed to reflect the contextual variables just described:

Table 2

Matching Planning to Organizational Context

| Contextual Variables | Planning Approach | |
|---|---|---|
| | Programmed | Adaptive (Goal-free) |
| Coupledness | Tightly Coupled | Loosely Coupled |
| Resource Base | | |
| Stability | Stable | Shrinking or expanding |
| Flexibility | Adequate | Inadequate or more than adequate |
| Reliability | Low Discretion | High Discretion |
| Activities and Audiences | | |
| Sustaining | Many | Some |
| Emerging | Some | Many |
| Projected | None | Some |
| Overall Stability of Environment | Stable | Unstable |

The key to the Berman argument lies not in its relatively simplistic classification of situational parameters, but in the suggestion that these variances probably cluster themselves in linked configurations and that one can begin to explore mixing and matching implementation approaches to fit such combinations. We might argue along similar lines in regard to planning approaches on an organization-wide, sub-unit, project, and individual basis.

## Outcomes of Planning

A management function with multiple purposes should have multiple outcomes. In this section, we will examine likely products of planning, and the possible consequences and effects of organizational planning.

Products of planning. The primary product of planning is almost never a plan, often not even a document. The planning process itself, its impact on the attitudes and behaviors of organizational stakeholders, is sometimes the planned outcome of planning, and frequently its most important product. Personal investment in the planning process can produce positive attitudinal

change, procedural improvements, and consensual feelings about the organization and its directions (or, of course, it can sometimes produce the reverse).

The picture of planning as a process resulting in a single five-year document is extremely popular. We will draw from the planning types enumerated in the "Focus of Planning" section to illustrate three less conventional outputs.

1. Symbolic planning - Here, the output is an image (whether documented or not) of what the organization values and where it is going. A hallmark document might take the form of a brief "constitution" or statement of purpose for being. A non-documentary outcome could be a better sense of institutional identity. The image created can also serve as a symbolic response to demands placed on the organization--demands that it is not fulfilling. For instance, a school district might satisfy public demand for improvement in the area of basic skills by drafting a three-year plan for basic skills development.

2. Procedural planning - Documentary outcomes are not the object of this game; but if they emerge, they usually focus only on the interests of the group involved in the process. Usually, the sole outcome is a positive feeling about having contributed to the organization's formal planning design.

3. Decisional planning - In this case, documentary outputs are likely and they can take a variety of forms, e.g., mission statements, memoranda of understanding, position papers, proposals, planning reports, option papers.

These three products of planning concentrate on organization-initiated activities. In addition, naturalistic planning is going on every day within an organization. When individuals create their organizational cause maps, negotiate them with others in their organizational environment, and attempt to reconstruct their organization accordingly, real organizational change is occurring. The products of naturalistic planning are subtle and usually not reported in documentary form, however. From the viewpoint of formal organizational planning and planners, the output of naturalistic planning is merely the ebb and flow of organizational activities, emphases, preferences, power, and problems that influence the content and process of formal planning agendas.

## Effects of planning

### Case Example

"Another dean, another five-year plan. They come and go so fast that one plan is only in Year 2 before the next one is started."

"They say they won't fund any projects until they have a comprehensive state plan." "Don't worry, they don't need a state plan, just a state planning document. They'll crank it out and we'll do what we want to do."

"We're not really planning, we're just developing a mission statement for the accrediting association."

"I hope I can get someone to fill in for me on the planning task force. I'm way too busy to sit around with that group for a semester."

There is little doubt that most organizational participants are cynical and disillusioned in regard to planning. To many, it seems that the designated planners collect massive amounts of data and draw up voluminous documents, while life within the organization proceeds undisturbed.

The impact of planning surely has been diminished by an overemphasis on rationalistic, organization-wide planning; too little advantage has been taken of naturalistic planning ventures. Then again, many results of planning may miss our notice because we are attuned to look in only one place for outcomes, and for only one type of outcome.

1. If the scope of impact is narrower than the whole organization, it is often overlooked, even though impact on a particular program or subunit may be very great.

2. If an impact is of short duration, it is often quickly forgotten. Yet most planning ventures have their greatest impact on close-up periods of high predictability.

3. If the impact was unintended, it is either overlooked or discounted. Organizational participants are not naturalistic inquirers scanning their environments to assess attitudinal changes attributable to planning involvement--yet many of the impacts are to be found in that area.

4. If the impact falls outside conventional purposes of decisional and futurist planning, it is often disregarded as outside the legitimate reasons for planning.

Summary

In the preceding pages, we have attempted to introduce a more comprehensive set of concepts and variables to collectively represent what planning is. We review them in Table 3, simultaneousy comparing the images of planning conveyed by traditional rational systems to those associated with more adaptive, goal-free approaches.

Table 3

Planning Variables Associated with Rational and Adaptive Images of Planning

| Variable Clusters | Views of Planning | |
|---|---|---|
| | Rational | Adaptive/Goal Free |
| Temporal focus | Future | Future<br>Present<br>Past |
| Focus on role of the planner | Futurist | Futurist<br>Social Scientist<br>Historian |
| Uses of planning | Decisional<br>Futurist | Decisional<br>Futurist<br>Political<br>Procedural |
| Scope of involvement | Management | Management<br>Individual<br>Sub-units |
| Style of involvement | Designated<br>Formal | Designated<br>Formal<br>Diffuse<br>Informal |
| Focus of involvement and activity | Centralized | Centralized<br>Decentralized |
| Processes | Sequential<br>Cumulative | Pervasive<br>Encapsulated<br>Contained<br>Spontaneous<br>Continuous<br>Loosely Coupled |
| Context | Predictable<br>Stable<br>Tightly Coupled | Variable<br>Changeable<br>Loosely Coupled |
| Products | Unitary<br>Cumulative | Unitary<br>Multiple<br>Cumulative<br>Discrete |

Table 3 depicts adaptive, goal-free planning as the broader, more inclusive concept. In terms of focus, uses, involvement, products, and locus, the goal-free view extends the more traditional perspective. In terms of process and context, however, the adaptive/goal-free perspective challenges the more traditional view. From time to time, intraorganizational groups will emerge for which the traditional view is appropriate; but in most complex organizations most of the time, this will not be the case.

The alternative adaptive image of planning can be characterized by the following generalizations, which summarize our "inventory" of generative concepts and key variables.

1. Planning is the activity initiated formally by an organization and informally by organizational participants as a means to:

   - sense the future
   - understand the present
   - rationalize the past

2. Planning is undertaken to achieve symbolic, advertisable, rationalistic, political, procedural, decisional, and futuristic ends.

3. Planning is a device that can affirm (or undermine) the bond between the individual and the organization.

4. Planning is a diverse process that occurs throughout an organization all the time; it can be usefully imagined as comprehensive, encapsulated, contained, spontaneous, continuous, and loosely coupled.

5. Planning is "of the organization," as well as "by the organization." It is a naturalistic process through which organizational participants help to create and maintain their organizational environments.

6. Planning is context-bound and situationally oriented. It is affected by:

   - the degree of coupledness of the organization
   - the stability, sufficiency, flexibility, and reliability of the organization's resource base
   - the level of institutionalization of the organization's activities and audiences (sustaining, emerging, or projected).

7. Planning is a process with multiple products, e.g., mission statements, memoranda of understanding, position papers, proposals, planning reports, a better or worse sense of institutional identity, procedural improvements or decrements, higher or lower consensus about the organization.

8. Planning yields multiple organizational impacts of varying levels of predictability and control.

Interposition

The pervasiveness of the planning function in organizations seems to preclude the notion that the process will ever be captured by a single management tool. The multiple organizational purposes and products of planning suggest that the effective planners are undoubtedly those who are effective administrators; good planning is what good administrators do.

The perspective on planning that emerges from the concepts and variables summarized above is broader and more complex than the traditional view of planning in organizations. It dictates that:

1. Planning is a natural and inevitable aspect of organizational life. To restrict planning to an imposed management function is to deny its inherent vitality, diversity, and utility.

2. The role of the designated planner is likely to be more people-oriented than data-oriented. Management's function in planning is not to be the organizational planner, but to facilitate and effectively use the ongoing planning activities that occur across the organization.

3. Therefore, no single strategic approach to planning will be suitable or effective in multiple contexts and for multiple uses.

(Nonetheless, strategies and tactics appropriate to our less conventional perspective can still be suggested. Section III will introduce images to further open up your view of what planning is, and strategies for doing the same with other members of your organization.)

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III

# PLANNING TO PLAN

Anne S. Huff

Thus far, we have argued that goal-based planning--the planning logic almost universally in use, though hardly universally successful--makes unrealistic assumptions about educational organizations. If the assumptions of rational planning fit these organizations so imperfectly, why has the rational model endured and spread? The answer may have to do in part with the lure of simplifying structures that make our diverse world more understandable. The great disadvantage of goal-based planning procedures--and also what makes them attractive--is that they are simplistic. They are conceptually easy to grasp; they simplify; they structure information needs; they outline a series of next steps. In short, the belief system of goal-based planning provides a vehicle for ordering (and sometimes ignoring) complexities that might otherwise paralyze action. As Martin Burlingame (1979) says: "Simplifications reduce information costs and free the administrator from complex assessments that take time away from activities considered to be more important" (p. 5).

In addition, the goal-based paradigm is attractive because of the sizable body of tools--procedures, activities, "things to do"--that has gradually accumulated to support it. Books offer detailed planning activities. Consultants are available. Colleagues make suggestions.

Even more importantly, the planner operating out of the goal-based tradition is afforded valuable guidance about what to do first (establish long-range goal statements) and when to stop (after short-range programs and budgets have been established.) This "logical" order makes it possible to fit planning activities together. It helps the planner decide when to have management retreat; when to ask for preliminary budget statements; or when to involve persons from other units of the organization.

For the planner, all these things are vital: (1) a framework for understanding what planning is supposed to do; (2) a body of prescribed procedures; (3) an order for introducing planning activities. Together, they allow the "planning of planning." We do not want to imply that the planning of planning must be goal-oriented, however. It is nonsensical to suggest that planners develop strong goals for the processes they interject into loosely coupled educational settings with vague and frequently diverse desires. But is it therefore necessary to expect planners to operate without any sense of the purpose of planning activities? Is it desirable to proceed without structured activities or at least a sense of the way in which activities might be ordered?

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## The Usefulness of a Framework for Understanding Planning

Research on cognitive processes underscores the importance of beliefs and frameworks in making sense of situations. Some structure, some image of what planning is for and how it can proceed, is necessary to the planning process itself. But how can we match a single image with educational organizations that are so varied and changing? The following discussion suggests that the way to accommodate this dilemma is with a variety of loosely structured, less prescriptive images or metaphors of planning--metaphors to be interpreted, elaborated, even discarded as conditions dictate.

There is considerable evidence that individual cognitive processes rely on distortion and even ignorance to make sense of the world. Steinbruner's (1974) literature review yields several principles regarding the way people process information. Memory is organized by overall concepts rather than by details; information is processed to maintain consistency with beliefs; cognitive mechanisms keep the structure of belief as simple as possible. Recent work on reading and other learning activity confirms these observations (Freedle, 1979).

The literature suggests that our frameworks/beliefs often prevail even in the face of contradictory evidence. This is because they perform for us the invaluable function of making interpretation and coordination possible. The framework of goal-based planning will not be abandoned unless some alterantive framework to facilitate interpretation of current and future activities is provided to replace it. Some structure is necessary precisely because educational organizations tend to be so complex, diverse, and difficult to understand.

Remember, too, that rational planning models remain dominant partly because people outside of the educational organization (parents, federal funding agencies, et al.) expect them. The individual organization is pressured to adopt the procedures of goal-based planning to increase its legitimacy in the eyes of these outsiders (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Goal-based planning cannot be abandoned without substitute frameworks for expressing planning purposes and outcomes simply to outsiders.

But this does not mean that the replacement must be one all-purpose way of thinking about planning, suitable for all organizations and occasions; nor that we must retain the same rigidities and underlying distortions that goal-based schemes have exhibited. Perhaps we can (in fact, we must) content ourselves with generating a variety of looser images--metaphors of planning that will still offer some guidance for choosing planning activities without firmly dictating their uses or outcomes.

If long-term goals cannot be foreseen or guaranteed, the planner is freed from the burdens of being seer and guarantor and can instead stimulate and facilitate planning based more closely on current needs in specific situations. The following pages offer some perspectives on how goal-free

planning might be approached. They are quite frankly speculative, personal, and somewhat whimsical metaphors. (Others might well prefer different images of planning; the appendix offers a "technology of foolishness" for discovering alternative metaphors.)

## Four Metaphoric Frames for Planning

A metaphor is the likening of two things that are not the same. The comparison sometimes has the effect of highlighting aspects of the things compared that were not previously perceived or thought interesting. A metaphor also proposes that one thing might be treated as if it were another; it suggests that the "logic" or structure of one "side" of the metaphor somehow parallels that of the other. The following four metaphors suggest four alternative frameworks for goal-independent planning. Each implies a different answer to the question, "What is planning supposed to do?" For convenience, each metaphor is cast in terms of intraorganizational planning--but each could be applied at the interorganizational and national levels as well.

### Planning as vision-testing.

> optometry: The practice or profession of testing the eyes for defects in vision in order to prescribe corrective glasses.*

If we all filter information through a set of limiting beliefs and assumptions, then an optometrist-planner might provide a useful periodic check of the "lens" through which members of an organization make sense of activities. The planner could organize the search for flaws or inadequacies in present beliefs and assumptions, and could also help generate alternative assumptions that precipitate a different set of activities. The optometrist-planner asks, "What assumptions lead us to see things as we do?" "Are they the most realistic terms in which to see the organization and its alternatives for the future?" "What do you see if you start with an alternative set of assumptions?" These questions are necessary because the frameworks of beliefs that filter information are, in general, tacit rather than explicit.

This metaphor assumes that the basic issue of planning is whether or not accepted tacit assumptions about the nature of an organization will limit members in their responses to future situations. In the language of Section II, planning in this mode is most likely to be undertaken in support of future decision making. Planning is used to allow early reaction and to generate alternative ways of acting.

Examining "lenses" can also reveal the beliefs behind members' opinions about what the organization can do next. Disagreements over policy options may be resolved more easily if they are seen as arguments not about

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* This and subsequent definitions are selected and edited from The Random House Dictionary, Unabridged Edition, 1966.

what to do, but about different assumptions concerning what is or will be (Mason, 1969). The optometrist-planner may be able to defuse an antagonistic climate by clarifying the different frameworks assumed by protagonists.

Planning as matchmaking.

marriage: any close or intimate association.

The planner may play the role of the skilled matchmaker who tries to understand the characteristics of an organization and then suggests one or more potential "mates." The matchmaker-planner leads the organization to ask, "What are the best traits of this organization?" "Who in the environment will most value these traits?" and "Who can live with our shortcomings?" It may also be necessary to ask, "How can we present the organization in the best light to those with whom association must be maintained?"

This metaphor leads to a more active role for the planner. In choosing a matchmaker image, the planner is assuming that the basic task of the planning process is to improve the alignment of the organization (or subunits of the organization) with what are sometimes called "external stakeholders." The metaphor focuses on what Section II calls the political, support-garnering function of planning. Within the organization, matchmaking can also help with the semi-political task of uniting sub-units in common pursuits. Diverse desires within the organization and/or diverse stakeholders may be accomodated by subdividing the organization and providing more than one "match." Here again, the planner aims to find stable matches that build on positive traits and avoid the incompatibilities that might lead to untimely divorce.

Planning as physical education.

fit: adapted or suited; qualified or competent; prepared or ready; in good physical condition.

It may be useful to look at organizations as being in training for a demanding sport. For example, think of organization members as a rowing team. The planner-coach encourages the aspiring athlete/organization to evaluate performance to date, and sets up additional "training routines" to develop specific skills. The planner-coach helps decide who should hold down what position, helps identify the additional talent needed, spends extra time with the coxswain (project manager), and--perhaps most importantly--keeps an eye on successful tactics employed by the competition.

The key question in this process is, "What does this organization need to develop so that it can maintain and improve its performance?" The planner-coach takes as central an issue perceived to be less problematic in the preceding two metaphors--the question of how to improve skills. S/he hopes

to create the underlying attitude that just staying in shape demands steady exercise, while improvement requires experimentation and continuous analysis of performance.

Planning as counseling.

> sense: the meaning, reason or value of something; an opinion or judgment formed or held, especially by an assemblage or body of persons: "the sense of a meeting."

As Karl Weick (1979) has said, "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" Planners might be most useful if they would just concentrate on providing occasions for people to "see what they say." Uniting this idea with a counseling metaphor suggests that the planner might devote him/herself to the creation of low-threat, non-judgmental planning situations in which organization members can express themselves freely. The planner-counselor might especially encourage members to talk about what in the organization they do not understand, in the hope of gradually finding a more appropriate frame (Watzlawich, Weakland, and Fisch, 1974) for making sense of events. The basic questions of this mode are, "What is confusing about our present activities?" and "Can we 'reframe' our situation in ways that will increase understanding and allow us to act more effectively?" The overall issue is how to invest the organization with a greater sense of coherence and mission. Planning in this mode is particularly likely to be put to the symbolic uses identified in Section II. It can also be designed to clarify a pattern in present activities that can help guide future choices. Such planning may also improve the ability of the organization to present its activities more coherently to outsiders.

Refurbishing and relinquishing planning metaphors

One of the attractions of metaphoric thinking is that it generates its own questions. Considering planning as matchmaking, for example, might lead one to ask: "What about the potential mates--have they hired their own matchmakers? Will that change our efforts? Are 'stable unions' desirable? What about marriages that go on too long? Perhaps we need a professional 'un-matchmaker' as well?"

Such musings illustrate the pleasures and potential benefits of metaphor. For matchmaking is a well-worked-out form of experience; in borrowing its logic, we are acquiring an entire world-view within which to think about the planning experience. Questions generated by the metaphoric frame may illuminate hidden corners that more conventional thinking about planning has not been able to reveal.

Another of the attractions of metaphoric thinking about planning is that it reinforces the idea that there are multiple ways to understand educational settings and the role planning can play in them. The optometrist

metaphor, for example, with its emphasis on alternative assumptions, may obscure the need for allegiance to one course of action. The matchmaking metaphor may under-emphasize the need to attend to current unions. The training metaphor, emphasizing performance in a known game, may cloud the need for forecasting future changes in the game the organization is required to play.

Hence, an organization should consider switching metaphors--not so often that this too becomes one of the charades of planning, but often enough to allow different uses of planning to emerge. For example, the organization that feels fairly confident of the lens through which it views its situation may find greater benefit in planning activities that stress the skills currently possessed. Similarly, organizations that have accented this skills aspect of planning may benefit from questioning the assumptions that have led to concentration on current activities.

## Choosing Planning Activities Appropriate to the Metaphors

A frame for understanding what planning can do can also be used for deciding on specific planning activities. The four planning metaphors developed above will be re-examined here for ideas about such activities.

Planners operating from each of the four metaphoric modes above might be expected to ask organization members to participate in different kinds of planning activities. For example, the vision-testing image suggests that the planner arrange the following kinds of activities:

- a procedure to specify the "glasses" currently used in the organization ("What are we doing?" and "What assumptions lead us to do things this way?")
- a procedure to generate alternative lenses
- a procedure to help organization members "try on" alternative lenses ("If we make alternative assumption P, what activities might we be pursuing?")
- some device for evaluating whether current assumptions (and activities) should be changed.

The matchmaking metaphor leads to a different set of activities. The planner using this image might choose:

- an activity that specifies the "traits" of the client organization or sub-unit ("What can we do well? Where are we weak?")
- an activity that identifies potential "mates" and specifies their traits
- a procedure for envisioning the outcome of various possible "unions"

- a "trial" encounter, perhaps including activities to promote enthusiasm and commitment of participants

- rematch exercises as necessary

An alternative set of activities is suggested by the physical education metaphor. Here, we might need:

- some device analogous to the training film--to help team members "see" how they are performing

- an activity that will diagnose performance and devise a training schedule to (a) reinforce and support areas of strength and (b) improve performance as needed

- an activity that focuses attention on the "competition," both for comparison and as a source of new training ideas.

Finally, the counseling metaphor suggests yet another set of activities:

- a device for eliciting descriptions of the organization that focus on what is not well understood

- activities that help "frame" poorly understood experience

- activities that help organization members "role play" desired behavior.

While metaphors of planning may provide some useful direction for the kind of planning activities needed, they do not mandate or even identify specific activities ready-made. Certainly, some techniques of goal-oriented planners can be put to new uses here. In addition, there are a number of sources in the literature of other fields to which the planner can turn for specific alternative procedures or techniques. These sources do owe some allegiance to goal-oriented thinking; but it should be easier for the educational planner to avoid these limitations when borrowing from a new area.

Creative problem solving and futures research. This is an area with a particularly rich set of procedures that could be adapted to planning purposes. It emphasizes creative ways of solving problems (e.g., Koberg and Bagnall, 1972; Adams, 1974; Gregory, 1967) and of thinking about the future (Jantsch, 1967; Martino, 1972). Techniques from this tradition might be helpful for planning within each of the four metaphoric contexts described earlier.

For example, manipulative verbs (Koberg and Bagnal, 1972, p. 67; Adams, 1974, pp. 87-88) might be of interest to the optometrist-planner attempting to generate alternative lenses for organization members to "see" possible new activities, and to the coach-planner searching for new "routines" or activities that might improve performance. The central device of this technique is a list of verbs. The original list suggested by Alex Osborn included the following: Adapt? Modify? Magnify?

Substitute? Rearrange? Reverse? Combine? Participants are asked to think of ways in which some initial stimulus (a current program, for example) could be changed by applying each verb.

A similar technique is called morphological analysis (Martino, 1972, pp. 302-316). An interesting variation on this general method of analysis is proposed by Koberg and Bagnal (1972, p. 70) as a "fool-proof invention-finding scheme." They suggest tallying attributes of an object or situation (for instance: size, composition, structure, purpose), then listing as many alternatives as possible below each item. The ballpoint pen they use as an example is cylindrical and plastic. They list faceted, square, beaded, and sculptured as alternatives to the first attribute; and metal, glass, wood, and paper as alternatives to the second. Then "forced connections" are made by randomly combining one element from each column of attributes. Thus, a square wood pen is one inventive alternative to a cylindrical plastic one.

Another technique, which might be particularly useful when planning with many participants, is the 7x7 procedure proposed by Gregory (1967, pp. 45-54). This involves recording participants' ideas, names of resource people, background information, and so forth one at a time on small "idea-bit" papers. The papers are grouped into seven piles according to their similarities and commonalities. This step provides an opportunity to exclude impertinent data, modify poorly stated ideas, enrich concepts or defer some information for future reference. The papers in each pile are then ranked into seven groups according to criteria such as importance, usefulness, timeliness and innovativeness. After this step, the papers are arranged on a board with seven columns and seven rows. The columns across the top are labeled to identify each of the seven similar groups. The seven rows are labeled along the side from the highest ranking at the top to the lowest priority at the bottom. The group then analyzes the information displayed on the board and considers implications for planning.

Adaptive planning. Another potential source of techniques has been called adaptive planning (Emery and Emery, 1978; Trist, 1978; Argyris and Schol, 1978; Michael, 1973). Work in this area has sprung from concern about the increasing complexity of organizational environments. Proponents suggest that organizations need to concentrate planning efforts on learning more about their own values and the nature of the environment.

Toward this end, Trist (1978, pp. 401-402) reports on a method of surveying organization members, summarizing the resultant data, and arranging feedback and discussion sessions for "organizational families." This technique can promote shared perception while preserving a sense of individual diversity. Another technique with the same objective, called reciprocal scenarios, requires an individual to describe another person's "ideal organization." Then, based on feedback from the other, the first individual modifies that description until it "fits" (Goodman and Huff, 1978).

A more complicated idea, that of the search conference described by Emery and Emery (1978), focuses on group explorations of ideals. The conference is so arranged that participants gradually become "learning planning communities" with more closely aligned ideals. This requires attention to participant and site selection, conference timing, and participant orientation; but success depends primarily on how well conference staff have been trained to be non-intrusive and non-expert. Their primary function is to promote formation of a group identity which in turn fosters group learning. Therefore, this technique would probably appeal to planners working in the counseling mode.

Information sciences. A third set of authors (especially Mason, 1969; Churchman, 1971; Mitroff and Kilman, 1976) are united by strong interest in the information needs of individuals and organizations. Mason, (1969), for example, suggests a dialectical procedure (which might be of special interest to the optometrist-planner) for comparing two attractive policy alternatives. He outlines the protocol for a debate between two staff groups to be held before an assembly of policy makers. Ideally, the impartial policy-making body can then devise a synthesis that utilizes aspects of each alternative.

This notion has been challenged by Crosier (1980), who suggests that the dialectical confrontation may sometimes create too much uncertainty for decision makers. The alternative he and others (Herbert and Estes, 1977) suggest is staff preparation of a devil's advocate case against current policy--which may enrich decision making without creating too much doubt about the organization's underlying assumptions.

Mason's more recent work with Mitroff (Note 1) continues to use a dialectic procedure, but also requires that policy makers develop a stakeholder analysis. In this procedure, the various individuals or organizations who have reason to care about policy decisions are systematically identified, and their potential impact on the organization is outlined. Such a tactic might have particular attraction for the matchmaking planner.

Mitroff has reported on an interesting exercise conducted with Kilman (1976) that might be adopted by educational planners. This organizational stories procedure involves dividing a group into sub-groups by type (such as: area of expertise, special interests, or priorities). Each sub-group then devises a story about its ideal organization; the results for each sub-group tend to be quite different. The counselor-planner might adapt such a procedure to the task of clarifying what is most confusing about current organizational activities.

Strategic management. Some methods of strategic management--originally developed for use by profit-making organizations--also may be of interest to educational planners. Rumelt (1979) has recently argued that the goal-based notion of strategy has limited utility. Some authors in this area have replaced goal-based descriptions with a cluster of ecological metaphors through which business organizations are seen as seeking a "niche" in the environment, and using their resources to develop "competitive advantage."

Hofer and Schendel's (1979) recent work can serve as a source for techniques from this area of thinking, even though their own vantage on business behavior is goal-oriented. For example, they provide an overview of portfolio matrix techniques (pp. 30-36) which attempt to characterize activities in various areas by their relative importance to the organization, relative dominance in the "market," stage of industry "evolution," and so on. Similar matrixes might be useful to coach-planners for inventorying the skill mix of an organization.

The same authors' discussion of acquisition analysis (pp. 95-98) might be of special interest to the matchmaker-planner. Here, the focus is on how new activities might alter a company's present portfolio; especially, whether a new acquisition can utilize expertise already existing in the organization.

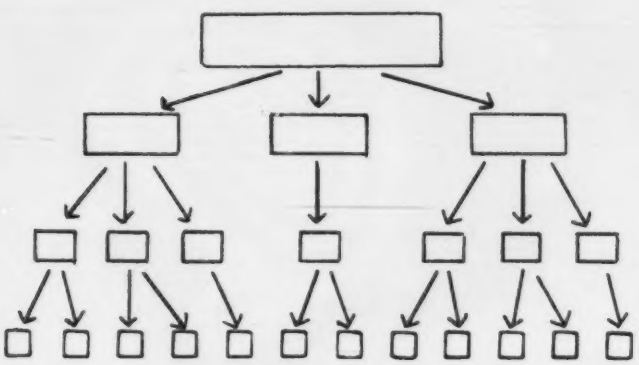
A final technique with an even broader focus is called the environmental profiling procedure (Huff and Ranney, Note 2). This system asks members of an organization to identify the most important elements of their environment, and then to consider, via a comparative questionnaire, where relationships with the environment can most profitably be changed. The questionnaire builds on a decision-making model proposed by Janis and Mann (1977). They suggest that "complete" problem-solving techniques are unlikely to be pursued unless (1) present strategy has more risks than likely alternatives, and (2) there is time available to find a better solution. The questionnaire also compares planning alternatives given the amount of information available and the anticipated future importance of each area to the organization.

## Timing and Sequencing the Planning Process

It is not enough to have an overall view of what planning can accomplish in a particular educational setting, or to have identified some planning activities that fit this general scheme.

Suppose an elementary school district with a strong tradition in programmatic innovation decides to use the development of an organizational plan to scrutinize its traditions and to formally outline a set of activities for the next several years. The individuals in charge of planning might have a slant similar to the vision-testing metaphor developed in the first part of this chapter; and perhaps they decide to use a devil's advocate procedure. (As you will recall, this planning aid involves preparation of a "case" against current activities, with the aim of highlighting potential difficulties. It would seem to be a good candidate for the "lens questioning" activity occasioned by the vision-testing metaphor.) But planners might well ask themselves: "Should a devil's advocate activity be the very first thing we do?" "How extensive should the negative case be? Should it cover every program, or only a few?" "What activity should we choose to follow a devil's advocate experience?" In short, how should the process of planning be managed?

The rational process. Note that most of these questions would not arise (or would be less important) for those embracing a goal-based image of planning. At the heart of the goal-oriented model is a pyramidal sequence of activities. The planner helps the organization find the keystone--the long-range goal(s) of the organization--and then directs attention in a downward cascade of increasing detail over a shorter and shorter time horizon. The sequence implied by this approach is:



goals (where we want to go)

objectives (more specific stepping stones to goals)

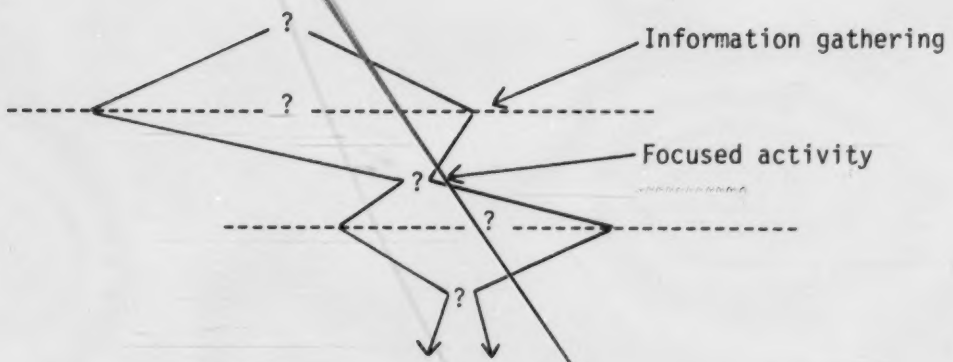
strategies (ways of achieving objectives)

tactics (specific actions to carry out each strategy)

Since we have rejected this procedure as unrealistic and unrewarding, what are our alternatives? More explicitly, what can we do to make planning reflect the current situation--not yesterday's plans or tomorrow's goals?

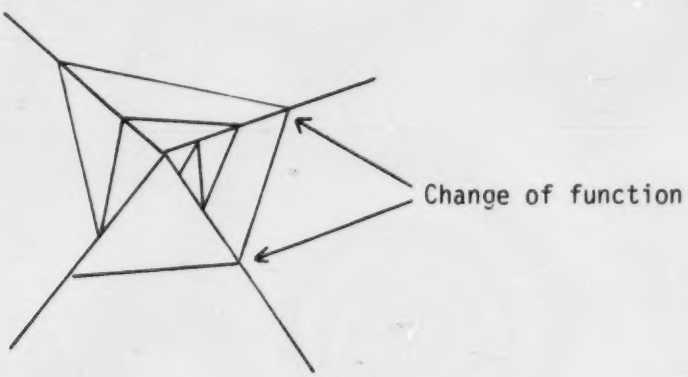
The final section of this paper offers three alternatives. The first suggests that planning activities might alternate between divergent (broadening, questioning) activities and convergent (focusing, question-answering) activities. The second (not necessarily contradictory) perspective proposes that planning activities alternate among political, symbolic, managerial, and other uses of planning. The third suggests that the planner must make a basic decision between activities aimed at refining the current direction of the organization and more revolutionary re-directing activities.

The accordion path. The process of planning may be productively viewed as the alternation of diverging and converging activities. The planner is constantly deciding whether to view the organization in a broader context (in order to increase understanding) or more narrowly (to focus on the most important or workable aspects of specific problems). Over time, both diverging and converging (or scanning and focusing) activities are necessary. A visual representation of the process might look like an accordion. More accurately, each diverging or converging activity is likely to alter the way the organization is viewed, so that the pattern of activity might be thought of as yielding a crooked accordion path like this:




Throughout the process, planners are asking, "Do we need to know more before we proceed?" "Do we need to concentrate our attention before we can proceed?" Thus, the accordion path of planning involves successive periods of information gathering and focused activity.

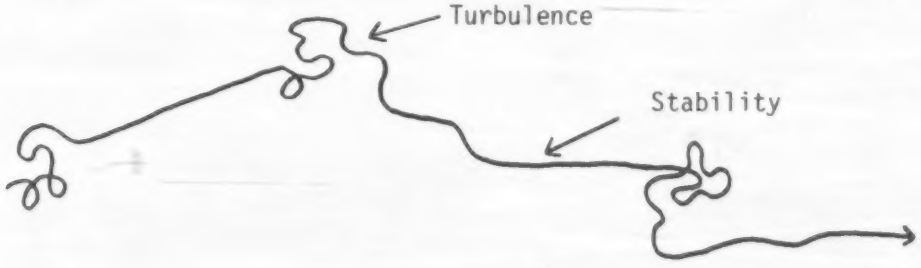
The spider web. As we admit more and more functions under our definition of planning, it becomes less and less likely that all of them can be addressed at once. The planner might consider sequencing activities so that a variety of aspects of planning are addressed sooner or later. This view can be depicted as a cockeyed spider's web:




This perspective on the problem of ordering planning implies that all activities revolve around a single general question: "What should we be doing?" But over time, some planning processes will address this

question primarily in political terms. ("Who cares about what we are doing? Will a change of activities create or destroy valuable alliances?") At other times, planning activities might be focused more explicitly on the symbolic functions of planning. ("How can we generate enthusiasm for this set of activities? How will new activities affect perception of an ongoing program?")

The knotted string. From a longer time perspective, as Mintzberg (1978) argues, an organization can be seen as alternating between fairly stable, predictable eras and occasional periods of doubt, confusion, and inconsistent activity. During a turbulent phase, the planner might best ask: "Is this a time to schedule planning activities that may lead to a radical reconceptualization of some aspect of this organization's work?" During a stable interval, a more appropriate question would be: "Is this the time to improve performance in the direction to which we are presently committed?" This view of sequencing might be depicted as a string that occasionally lies knotted back upon itself.




Organizations infrequently change the basic direction of their activities. In between times of major questioning, planning is likely to involve improving performance along a given path. Thus, the planner should take care that planning activities do not routinely go "too deep"--saving basic reconceptualizing activities until the organization's history and current energy suggest that it is time to raise knotty questions.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed three subjects that will help support educational planning as a formal yet goal-free activity:

1. Frameworks for understanding what planning can and should do. Planning frames, such as the four metaphors cited, help organize the planner's thoughts about what kind of activities are needed; and they help organize and interpret the results of these activities.

2. Specific planning activities. Pragmatically, planning involves asking people in the organization to do something. As we move away from goal-based planning, sources in related fields can help generate new goal-independent activities.

3. An overview of the planning process. Ideas about the planning process reach across various metaphors of planning, which may fit particular educational settings, to suggest some more encompassing guidelines for choosing, ordering, and terminating planning activities.

To draw the discussion of these three points together, it might be useful to return to the Pilot State Dissemination Program. (Sieber's description of this program, you will recall, emphasized its messy theoretical foundations, staff inexperience, lack of client understanding and of direct power to carry out change, and the confusion and demoralization at the program's inception.) Section I suggested that we imagine ourselves confronted with the responsibility of developing a national design for school improvement based on the experience of PSDP.

Let's begin with the four metaphors outlined in this chapter. The vision-testing metaphor does not seem quite right, since we are faced with a new program area with few established procedures. But--since the Pilot State Dissemination Program has been suggested as a basis for this nation-wide effort--it does make eminently good sense to spend some time considering the "frame" that led us to think of this program as successful and to ask ourselves, "Do these assumptions still make sense in the new settings we now envision?"

The matchmaker image of planning seems even more attractive for a new interorganizational effort. Perhaps our planning could focus on collecting profiles of units wishing to be involved in the program. We could run a "marriage bazaar" to help prospective mates find each other. We could also chaperone some first meetings to help satisfy ourselves and the "parent" organizations involved that the match looked like a wise one.

If that sounds too manipulative, an alternative planning effort might focus on skill or "fitness." The planner could take the first recruits and try to help fashion a "team"--devising planning activities that would help each member improve his/her skill level and ability to work effectively with others. New members might be sought to round out this team. The performance of other "crews" could be monitored as a source of inspiration and good training ideas.

Then again, perhaps the national-level planning effort could concentrate on making the inevitable period of adjustment, the initial phase of "confusion and demoralization," a shorter and less painful time. Planning sessions could be seen as regular breaks in routine during which program participants stop to reflect on their progress and try to help each other and the national staff "make sense of" their school improvement efforts. Such sessions would promote understanding between field agents and other educational professionals, and might speed the process of fitting improvement efforts to local conditions.

The four metaphors we have been using are not the only ones possible, of course. Suppose we were to think of ourselves as seamstresses working on a patchwork quilt. Our national dissemination program might be conceived of as the thread linking disparate parts of the educational system.

Or suppose we use the agricultural extension agent analogy. Planning would emphasize getting new information to the agents and providing them with a rich mix of "seed types" to transmit. Or we could adopt a corporate metaphor: Planners could think of themselves as helping to promote a balanced "portfolio" of project types. If local projects tend to emphasize short-term efforts, national planning would look for opportunities to promote longer-term associations. If universities or state agencies become over-represented in the "portfolio," planners might help recognize this imbalance and redress it by generating new types of linkages. There are many ways to think of planning that do not begin with the question: "What are our long-range goals?"

Several sources of specific techniques look attractive for our nation-wide school improvement planning. If we are committed to "match support to strength in the field," as Clark suggests, then the creative problem-solving literature can help free us from preconceptions of what the strengths in the field are. This literature might also suggest ways to elicit innovative combinations of units in the field. The adaptive planning literature, with its focus on learning rather than prescription, is certainly appropriate. The information-oriented writers would seem to be a good fit for a program that has at its heart the information-transmitting extension agent. Similarly, the strategic management ideas of fitting the organization into niches in the environment and of focusing attention in areas that promise high payoff seem consonant with the alternative planning strategies suggested in Section I. In fact, as planners faced with these many sources, we may be troubled by the confusion of too many rather than too few possible activities.

One way to help ourselves out of this dilemma is to think briefly about the process of planning. Thinking of the planning path as an accordion, we would see that the early days of the Pilot State Dissemination Program were characterized by expanding activities. People did not know what to do; they had little theoretical guidance; their first efforts were probably a series of experiments in which participants effectively asked themselves: "Should the program be this? or this? or this? Do I need to know this? or this? or this?" Then, partially in response to confusion and frustration, participants gradually began finding things to do that worked for them and for the client system. In effect, they focused--they asked the broad questions much less frequently than they did at first. Once this focus was established, people had new questions about how to accomplish program activities, which returned them to an expansionary mode of thinking. Taking this as a model for our own hypothetical program, we might choose planning activities that initially broaden understanding of what is possible; then, before confusion becomes overwhelming, we could initiate activities that help focus attention on what "works in this situation." Then, once focus is established, let's again choose activities that look more broadly at new methods.

Perhaps we can also obtain guidance from the spider's web. The early days of planning will be consumed by knitting back and forth between political activities (negotiating a relationship between loosely coupled entities) and the symbolic process (presenting the program in a manner that will induce participants to commit energy and enthusiasm to it).

Then we might shift our attention to more analytic and future-oriented planning activities.

"Knotted string" planning can also be useful here. We at the national level can accumulate enough data from experience to allow us to be directive for a time. Then, with additional experience, it may make sense to court confusion by again raising questions about potentials of school improvement.

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APPENDIX: Matrix Metaphor Generation--A "Technology of Foolishness"

This appendix proposes a playful technology (March, 1976) for generating planning metaphors. Participants are encouraged to explore a large number of alternative relationships suggested by a series of metaphoric examples.

Procedure*

1. A group of 8 to 12 participants (drawn from the constituents of the planning setting) silently relate to five metaphoric categories (for example: travel, art, sports, medical, and cooking metaphors). Participants are encouraged to make observations spontaneously, mixing judgments and speculation. For example, one member might observe in a cooking metaphor:

   > "I don't feel planning should provide us with more recipes. What we need instead is a better sense of the ingredients available to us. I never know whether I can plan on having basil around or whether I'll have to improvise. And it makes me mad to improvise and then find out I could have had basil all along."

2. At the end of the first period, a facilitator asks for a listing of the ideas generated by each participant. These are summarized in the following manner on a large sheet of paper at the front of the room:

We need planning to...

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| journey | 1. provide a list of sights in the local area | 6. make sure we have enough time to "switch planes" | |
| arts | 2. get us "warmed up" for performance | 7. run a school for newcomers | |
| sports | 3. make sure the spectators understand the plays | etc. | |
| medicine | 4. provide vitamins | | |
| cooking | 5. give us a sense of available ingredients | | |

* This and two other procedures for using metaphors can be found in Huff (Note 3).

Contributions are collected in round-robin fashion, one idea at a time from each participant, following the sequence indicated. The number of categories and the size of the group should be coordinated so that an individual contributes to a different metaphor each time his/her turn occurs. As the session progresses, participants should be encouraged to build on each other's ideas. This phase continues until the matrix is filled, or until no new ways of describing planning are forthcoming.

3. Each participant is then given six* colored stickers. Everyone simultaneously chooses from the list generated in step 2 the metaphor s/he thinks most accurately pinpoints the current need for planning and places a sticker by the chosen item.

4. The facilitator identifies the four to eight metaphor descriptions most frequently chosen, then puts up a sheet of paper for each.

5. Round-robin discussion then continues, with each participant asked in turn to indicate (1) a reason why one metaphor is a particularly useful way to approach planning and (2) a reason why one is less useful. The pace is again rapid. Ideas are added to each sheet in pro and con columns. Discussion is not encouraged; instead, stated disagreements and alternative perceptions are recorded on the pro-con listing under each item.

6. A second short list is created by asking participants (again simultaneously) to place stickers by those few metaphors that they now feel are particularly good ways of approaching the planning task. The favorite metaphors produced by this vote can then help inform the choice of actual planning procedures.

Rationale

The underlying intention for the above procedure is the evocation of a wide range of perceptions about planning needs. In addition, the nominal group format (Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson, 1974) helps disassociate the individual from his/her own initial perceptions, and allows others' opinions to generate a more broadly conceived perspective. Individual idea-generation in step 1 is designed to capture the unique perceptions of each participant. The round-robin format for eliciting ideas is designed to get all participants involved in the procedure and to equalize participation. "Piggy-backing" of ideas is encouraged as a way of building group interaction and shared vision. In general, it is here assumed that those involved in a situation have essential knowledge about it, even though they may not as yet have formalized that knowledge.

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* All of these numbers are approximate; choose the number of votes allowed and the number of metaphors for further discussion (step 4) to fit the situation.

The voting procedure in step 3, as well as the initial non-evaluative listing in step 2, are designed to help individuals disassociate themselves from the metaphorical ideas for planning that they initially endorse. The discussion of the short list in step 5 reassociates them with ideas that have been enriched by group discussion. The final short list suggests the direction of group consensus without necessarily converging on a single description of planning.